

**Remarks of Janette Gilman, President, Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA)  
County Executive School Construction Announcement**

**Julius West Middle School  
31 October 2013**

Good morning and Happy Halloween! Thank you for inviting me to speak on behalf of PTA in Montgomery County, and thanks to the many PTA leaders from throughout the county who have joined me here this morning. These parents live capacity issues with their students every school day.

Tonight, many if not most of the over 151,000 children who attend Montgomery County Public Schools will fan out across the county going trick or treating. They will dress as everything from construction workers, to zombies, to superheros.

Some will venture to fabled haunted houses throughout the county in search of a special scare—tight, crowded staircases, leaky roofs, failing, noisy ventilation systems, small closets turned into something that approaches living space.....

Huh....sounds a little like a growing number of school buildings all across Montgomery County.

As others already have mentioned, today we find ourselves roughly in the middle of a decade of tremendous growth in our Montgomery County student population. Back in 2006, I stood before county leaders, many of whom stand with me today, pleading for capacity in the school buildings in my cluster: Old, outdated, facilities that could not be retrofitted to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century student needs; Buildings with HVAC systems well beyond their lifecycle, needing near constant, costly repair just to keep children warm and dry. And, simply, no space for learning or even lunch at an hour that remotely resembles lunchtime, shortages of classrooms and lack of sufficient core facilities. That was almost 10 years ago.

Since that time, the student population across the county has exploded; we've added well over 14,000 students since and will add as many or more over the next five to seven years. That's 25,000 students. That is, as was stated, in many counties in this state as big or bigger than an entire school system.

And yet, until today, we've tried only to compensate for this growth within the CIP process by adding a new elementary or two, working to add one middle school, adding capacity through additions and vital modernizations, all while trying to keep faltering plants and facilities running. And we constantly postpone and delay due to inadequate funding.

It hasn't been enough. It hasn't been fast enough. It is not enough for our kids and our schools. We can no longer choose between equally urgent projects. Because those projects aren't just

about space. They're about children. They are about over 151,000 kids who have one shot at an education; An education that it is our obligation—and our State's obligation—to provide.

The proposal announced by the County Executive today, in concert with a fully funded CIP, holds the potential to move from doing only what can be fit into a bottom line figure, to working to fund a solution that will enable all vital construction and maintenance projects to move forward.

On behalf of the nearly 50,000 PTA members in Montgomery County, I urge all our elected leaders to work together to find the dollars to create and maintain the learning spaces needed now to enable our children to dream big; to imagine and realize their potential. So that tonight's Halloween-costumed scientists, and inventors, teachers, superstars, and explorers, will, through the education we provide them, become those dreams.

And if you, our elected leaders, can find the path to fund and build and maintain our schools, we—and our children—will see you as superheros, whether you are actually wearing a cape tonight or not. Thanks and have a safe and happy Halloween!

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